

Proposed Policy

III.C. Intimate Relationships

Freedom of thought and expression and the opportunity for all members of the University community to pursue knowledge unencumbered are the foundation of the academic enterprise. The development of intimate relationships may, in some cases, compromise the academic relationships that are fundamental to the intellectual and professional development of members of the University. The faculty member - student academic relationship is of special concern in this context given the innate power imbalance between faculty and students; however, such power imbalances also may exist among faculty members. The purpose of this Policy is to protect the rights and interests of all members of the University community by avoiding the potential for real or perceived coercion, favoritism, bias, or exploitation that may be created by intimate relationships among members of the University community.

To provide clarity regarding the intentions and purposes of this policy, the following definitions are employed.

- **Student** refers to all full-time, part-time, visiting, or prospective undergraduate or graduate students, and all postgraduate trainees, research associates, residents, and fellows.
- For the purposes of this policy **Faculty** refers to tenure-track, instructional, adjunct, research, and clinical faculty members of all ranks. (Other individuals (e.g.: students, post-doctoral fellows and other trainees) who exercise academic authority over students should see their respective handbooks for related policies.)
- **Intimate relationships** refer to non-familial sexual, dating, and/or romantic relationships. Note: unwanted advances or other inappropriate behaviors may be considered sexual harassment, which falls under HR Policy 106.
- **The exercise of academic authority** includes the following activities (on or off campus): teaching courses, (i.e., having primary or shared responsibility for the conduct of a course but not, for example, simply delivering occasional guest lectures); grading or otherwise evaluating student work; advising on formal projects such as a thesis or other research; serving as an external examiner or member of a thesis committee; participating in decisions regarding student funding or resource allocation; performing clinical supervision; and making recommendations or otherwise influencing decisions regarding admissions, employment, tenure and promotions, or the awarding of grants, fellowships, or other recognitions. Generally, it is assumed that faculty exercise academic authority over all students in their department or program. However, there are circumstances and academic structures within the University where the assumption of academic authority may not be fitting, for example, in cases of some secondary faculty appointments or informal program affiliations, or in the distributed departments and programs in the School of Medicine & Dentistry. In such cases, it is left to the

Department Chair and cognizant Dean to define appropriate domains of academic authority; however, if there is uncertainty on the part of the student or faculty member academic authority should be assumed or clarification about the existence of academic authority should be sought from / determined by the Department Chair and cognizant Dean.

Any questions regarding the above definitions, as well as other aspects of this policy, should be directed to the University Intercessor or the appropriate Department Chair or Dean.

The Policy

III. C. i. Faculty are prohibited from entering into intimate relationships with undergraduate students of the University.

III. C. ii. Faculty are prohibited from entering into intimate relationships with any member of the University community over whom they exercise academic authority as defined above.

III. C. iii. Faculty are prohibited from accepting academic authority (as defined above) over any member of the University community with whom they currently share an intimate relationship, or with whom they have shared such a relationship in the past.

Violations:

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary actions, which can include, but are not limited to, written warnings, loss of privileges, mandatory training or counseling, probation, suspension, demotion (including revocation of tenure), expulsion, and termination of employment. Disciplinary actions will be enforced at the appropriate administrative level ranging from department Chair to the office of the Provost.

Exceptions:

In cases in which a mutually consensual relationship develops, exceptions to this policy may be granted, but must be managed carefully by agreement of both parties in the relationship, the Chair(s)/Dean(s) of the faculty member and other party, and the University Office of Counsel. A written management plan outlining measures to insure the integrity of the academic interaction and to protect the interests of all parties must be filed with the cognizant Dean and reviewed annually. The University Intercessor is available for guidance in the creation of such a plan.

III. D. Management of Academic Relationships with Immediate Family Members

Close familial relationships may exist between faculty members and other members of the University, for example when a faculty member's child, person over whom the faculty member has legal guardianship, spouse, or committed partner joins the University as a student or member of the faculty. In any such case in which the faculty member may exercise academic authority over the other party, unless there is an existing policy at the program level, a plan

must be developed in consultation with the cognizant Department Chair(s) detailing how any conflicts of interest will be managed. The plan must be approved by the affected party, the faculty member, and the cognizant Chair(s) and Dean(s).

Related policies include: <https://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/121.pdf> and <https://www.rochester.edu/working/hr/policies/pdfpolicies/106.pdf>. *Also refer to other handbooks as developed (graduate handbook, post-doctoral handbook, UG, etc.*

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